

The Vine Committee

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Saturday (13 July) to get an insight on how Rev Philip Tan does it. Then the next day, I heard God's voice telling me that the sermon message was not being recorded. I ignored it and true enough, Rev Philip Tan's message was not recorded. As Rev Philip Tan said, God is speaking all the time, like the radio waves, but if we are not tuned in, we cannot hear.

July was filled with activities as JCC prepared to celebrate its 46th Anniversary. As we grow older, we begin to want to hear God's voice so we invited Rev Philip Tan to fly down from Kuala Lumpur to give us some pointers on how to do so. It took a full



The next Sunday (21 July) we had our 46th Anniversary celebration service. As I viewed the sanctuary from the PA technician's high vantage, JCC was filled to over capacity.

"The purpose of Christian community in the church is not only our joy and spiritual growth. The purpose is also missions – displaying and advancing God's reign and rule in the world." – Joshua Harris (from Dug Down Deep)

Yes, God placed us here in Taman Jurong for a purpose. If we just concentrate on making ourselves joyful and grow in knowledge but never reach out to the people in our neighbourhood, then I think we have missed the purpose. *"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."* (1Corinthians 3:6). In this verse Paul seems to be saying that our job is to plant and water, so let's do our part and leave the growth to God.

Martin Cheah

celebrating
46 years 1967-2013
Jurong
Christian Church



GOD
IS FAITHFUL



ORDINARY TIME OF THE CHURCH

The season after Pentecost lasts from 26 May 2013 to 17 Nov 2013, a period of 26 weeks. So we are now still in the season, the longest season in the Church calendar. After this will come Advent again. Note that Advent begins the Calendar year¹ while the season after Pentecost completes it. In our Lutheran Calendar, the season after Pentecost is also known as the Time of the Church. Sometimes, it is also called Ordinary Time. The meaning of it is that it is not a special time for Christians to celebrate, but the ordinary time for the Church to engage in work (Matt. 28:19) towards the consummation of God's purpose for which He sent His Son, Jesus the Christ.

The "Full Season" of the Church starts at First Advent, when the Messiah came (to begin a spiritual preparation period full of hope for man) and it will culminate in the Second Advent when Christ comes again and the Ordinary Time of the Church will conclude as God's purpose is fulfilled. In between these two Advents, our journey as Christians gives us moments to pause to commemorate special events – the Lord's epiphany, His suffering and so forth. Commemorations ought to be reminders of our duty too. It is now Ordinary Time of the Church, a time for Christians to pick up their Gospel tools with their preparedness to toil in the fields across all nations to produce abundant harvest, to take out their fishing nets as fishers of men to haul in a big catch, according to how and what they have been prepared for by the Lord. Thankfully, the Lord has not left us alone. We have with us the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will continue to teach us all things. (John 14:26 NIV)

Do you think we can do much on our own without the help of the Advocate? Do you go tell the Advocate, "I don't need you; leave me alone?" The Advocate is here to give us help, give us reminders of things we may forget, to render support. Our body is His temple. He is a bulwark to us. Here are two great comments about Him and Pentecost:

"Before Pentecost the struggle was hopeless. After Pentecost they overcame. The Spirit made slaves into sovereigns, victims into victors, and cowards into conquerors." – J. Brice

"Men ablaze are invincible. Hell trembles when men kindle. The stronghold of Satan is proof against everything but fire. The Church is powerless without the flame of the Holy Ghost. Destitute of fire, nothing else really counts; possessed of fire, nothing else really matters. The one vital need is fire. Without the flame and fervour of the Holy Ghost the Church will never achieve its mission." – Samuel Chadwick

¹ The Vine (April 2013) – The Lutheran Liturgical Calendar

Christians who hear messages about Pentecost cannot fail to hark the point about speaking in tongues. This is as expected, because speaking in tongues features prominently in the passage Acts 2:1-13. However, in my humble opinion, the theme about Pentecost is not about the speaking in tongues per se, but about the presence and power of the Holy Spirit with us – the Advocate who came as Christ had promised that the Father would send. (John 14:26)

The speaking in tongue was one manifestation (appearance or indication). Remember that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit was in the appearance of a dove at Jesus' baptism, and it was in yet another dramatic way at the Lord's Transfiguration. The Holy Spirit can manifest (show up) in different ways, not necessarily by the speaking in tongues. Should Christians then seek this manifestation or that manifestation or some other? I think it is up to individual Christians prayerfully (without being grievously misguided like followers of some fatalistic cults that infamously got into the news in the past), and up to God to decide whether He sees any need or purpose to answer a "seeking" that is correct, harmless and desirable². It is a fact that not anyone who seeks a particular gift or manifestation gets it, and the failure to get it should never become an impediment to faith (with guilt conscience about "lack of faith" or "not seeking fervently enough", for example) or to the work that we are all called according to our varied giftings in the Ordinary Time of the Church. Certainly, it does not mean that if any Christian does not possess whatever that is claimed as a spectacular and vivid manifestation of the Holy Spirit – speaking in tongues, holy laughter, miraculous healing, falling under or resting in the Spirit, etc. – then the Advocate is absent. I shall refer to some Scripture passages that have contributed to my limited understanding:

- On the day of Pentecost when the apostles began speaking in tongues, it was not simply that they suddenly made utterances of unintelligible sounds out of their vocal cords. Their utterances were preceded by "a sound like the blowing of a violent wind" and "what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them." (Acts 2:2-3) The tongues were not gibberish, but heard and understood as a different personal language to different persons in the audience. (Acts 2:8) It was a particular occurrence

² Correct, harmless and desirable – in the human perspective of the individual according to his faith and understanding of the Word. Be careful. If a Christian entreats God for something and the outcome results in the Christian declining in faith or becoming subject to hurt (physically, emotionally or spiritually), then it is serious.

on a particular occasion (Day of Pentecost). This type of “speaking in tongues” is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. This means that the speaking in tongues at the day of Pentecost is not the type of speaking in tongues we know of in present days.

- In my humble opinion the type of speaking in tongues we know of in present days is more akin to the unintelligible tongues that Apostle Paul mentioned in his first epistle to the Corinthians. Unlike the tongues at the day of Pentecost, they are unintelligible to the listeners. (1 Cor. 14:2) If anyone speaks such tongues in front of witnesses, it is not more important or desirable than if he/she speaks in seclusion. This is because those who speak the tongues only edify themselves, not the Church. (1 Cor. 14:4, 9) For believers to speak in tongues in congregation, there must be interpretation. (1 Cor. 14: 13) Once I attended a Charismatic church. A pastor on stage spoke in tongues; another pastor interpreted the tongues.
- There are Christians who believe that the gift of speaking in tongues is no longer given after the apostolic age. (1 Cor. 13:8)

Pentecostal churches agree that speaking and interpreting tongues are not the only spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12: 6 – 11), but some (not all) among them teach that speaking in tongue is a gift given to every true Christian. I do not know of any church in Singapore that preaches tongue-speaking as a requirement for, or a contributory to, salvation.

What further pointers did Apostle Paul give? He said that he himself spoke in tongues more than anyone else in the Corinthian Church. (1 Cor. 14: 18 – 19). Obviously, he did not claim that he was therefore so much holier than his brothers and sisters in Christ and so much more assured of his salvation. His advice was that although speaking in tongues should not be forbidden (1 Cor. 14:39), “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” (1 Cor. 14:40) By orderly, he means that it should not disrupt good order in worship (refer passage heading in NIV for 1 Cor. 14:26 – 40). “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.” (1 Cor. 14:33)

I don’t feel uncomfortable when personally with anybody or in any congregation with people speaking in tongues. (I worshipped in a Charismatic

Church³ before.) However, I do feel a little uneasiness when I observe some (young in faith) Christians or non-believers or older Christians who are not perceptive of the tongue-speaking as a spiritual gift becoming distracted, and disconnected in the communion of worshippers in congregations where the open exercise of such a gift is uncommon. This spiritual distancing of Christians in communion⁴, sometimes with a spiritually stumbling effect, should never be encouraged. The Christians exercising their gift of tongue-speaking edify themselves (1 Cor. 14:4) but may obfuscate fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. (Imagine what would happen if some Pentecostal visitors to our dialect worship service start speaking in tongues.) This is what Apostle Paul said:

- On possibility of negatively affecting others: “So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?” (1 Cor. 14: 23)
- On speaking only with interpretation and one at a time: “If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. (1 Cor. 14: 27)
- On speaking in one’s privacy with God: If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.” (1 Cor. 14: 28)

The foregoing sharing about speaking in tongues brings me back to the topic: Ordinary Time of the Church.

In this Ordinary Time, and in the context of the turbulent waters swirling around churches everywhere, we need all the more to forge unity in our singular mission to pick up our Gospel tools to reach out to the lost. This Ordinary Time (some prefer to call it the season after Pentecost) is time for us to put hands to the

³ Charismatic Church and Pentecostal Church are not 100% alike in their beliefs, although they share many common teachings. Some members of Charismatic churches wrongly call themselves Pentecostals when they can be more accurately described as Charismatics. “Many in the Charismatic movement deliberately distanced themselves from Pentecostalism for cultural and theological reasons.” (Ref. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charismatic_Movement)

⁴ I am not talking about the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

ploughs with the spirit of unity, not a time for petty quarrels about whose and what spiritual gift is a greater (or the greatest) divine-blessedness. It is an urgent time to continue the work our Lord Jesus Christ started (to bring salvation to all nations) until full consummation of His purpose with the help and powerful backing of our Advocate (the Holy Spirit) who is in us and with us. It is not the time to waste, on debating how this Advocate does or will show Himself or assure believers of His presence with them through miraculous manifestations or plain-vanilla giftings.

As I pondered this topic, the Care Group study material on 1 Corinthians prepared by Pastor Andrew and with which Shepherd Martin Cheah has been leading my CG in discussions just came in timely and handily. In our study, we are reminded of the divisions in the Church in Corinth over so many issues. As bystanders looking into the Corinthian Church, and looking at the foolishness of the Corinthian believers in hijacking unity for the sake of pushing their half-cooked understanding of Christian living and church liturgical issues, what do we see? Are we more clear-minded as bystanders? (旁观者清, 当事者迷) Must thank Apostle Paul for his lucid lessons. Sometimes I feel that he is writing to the Church of today.

In a nutshell: The season after Pentecost is the Ordinary Time of the Church for believers to work and live out the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

God bless you and me!

JOHN LEE



The editors wish to thank all those who have written for The Vine. If perchance your article does not appear in this issue, it is because we have run out of space. It will appear in the following issue of The Vine.

It is encouraging to note that our young writers are becoming regular contributors. We hope that you will continue to wield your skill with words as you would use the sword of the Spirit.

God bless you and empower you.

Martin Cheah

God's Grace, Mercy and Justice

Is the God of the Old Testament same as the God of the New Testament?

As I was reading through the book of Joshua for the discipleship education class, it came upon me that the God of the OT was so harsh and unforgiving. The sin of one man Achan had caused 36 men to be killed in the battle of Ai (Joshua 7:5). Even though Achan had confessed his sin (Joshua: 20), he and his whole family, sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, his tent and all that he had were burned (Joshua 7:24-25).

Is God so harsh and showing no mercy? Was the book of Joshua written to show to us the seriousness of sin?

God is the same holy God in both the OT and NT. He cannot allow sin. I thank God I live in the NT covenant and experience God's grace and mercy through His Son's blood. Obedience is expected. We tend to take sin lightly knowing God's mercy and forgiveness and taking His love for granted. As I reflected on the seriousness of sin in God's eyes, I began to appreciate God's patient love, grace and mercy to me. From the OT reading, I hope I will always remember not to take God's love and mercy for granted. The Bible clearly records His salvation plan, warnings and judgments on mankind.

He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. (Rev 3:5)

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:15)

Grace is God blessing us although we don't deserve the blessing.

Mercy is God not punishing us although we deserve punishment.

Justice is we getting punished as we deserve it.

Lissa Law



Cambodia Missions Trip Reflections

This 7-day mission trip to Cambodia (from 19 – 25 June) was definitely an eye-opener for me. I learnt and experienced so many things. I also bonded a lot more with the mission trip team and got to know more about everyone. I was always very happy in this trip and laughed a lot together with my team mates.

Through painting, I became more disciplined as there were many times that I really wanted to give up but I persevered and continued my tasks to the end. I learnt that when you have started on something, you must finish up what you have done as you are responsible for it. When we finished painting, the sweet sense of accomplishment was totally worth all my hard work. It was a valuable lesson for me.

Although painting is no easy task, everyone tried to stay positive by singing songs, making jokes and even fellowshiping! This helped us to enjoy ourselves even when painting. Through working and laughing together with my team mates, I could learn more about them and build deeper bonds with each other.

The team also organised a Kids Camp for the children. I felt that the Kids Camp was the most memorable for me. When the number of children that came on the first day was much higher than expected, we had no choice but to cancel one of the arts & crafts and replace it with another activity. We had a schedule, but we did not fully stick to it. Therefore, through helping out in this Kids Camp, I learnt that you should always have a backup plan and that sometimes you just have to do things impromptu. Being a person who has to plan everything neatly, it was hard for me when things did not go according to plan, but I got over that and just let God decide what to do.

Watching the children having so much fun playing and worshipping God also taught me another important lesson in life. We should always have a deep yearning for God in our lives and have a childlike faith in him. We should also take joy in simple things like the children of Cambodia who enjoyed themselves so much during the simple games that they played, be it just kicking a soccer ball or playing “pass the parcel”.

This trip allowed me to meditate on and absorb God’s words. I usually did my reflections in the paddy field and I was truly 100% at peace in God. In God alone, I found true rest amidst the hectic events happening around me. My walk with God became much steadier and my faith in Him strengthened. I

learnt to trust in him no matter what. Even when things seem to be going wrong, the almighty God will always find a way to make it perfect again.

Bernice Lee



God is indeed our Jehovah Shammah, our Jehovah Shalom and our Jehovah Jireh. These are the characteristics of God that I encountered throughout this mission trip from the 19th to 25th June 2013.

God, the Jehovah Shammah, was always there watching over us and leading us daily, showering us with his love and blessings by bringing along Pastor Daniel and Pastor Moses, interns, cooks and a couple from LCOR who showed great love and care for us while we were staying in the Life centre. I felt that God's hand was also sheltering and protecting us from all harm. No major mishaps or injuries occurred throughout the trip, other than the time a member lost his passport in Changi Airport. Thankfully it was recovered in good time.

Throughout the stay in Kg Chnang, the team was encouraged to have their own personal daily devotions at the paddy fields near the centre. These daily devotions prepared by Rev Anthony was on the topic of rest. Indeed as I sat under the tree and gazed at the breath-taking view of the rice fields while doing the daily devotions, I felt at rest, but only physically. I realised that the "rest" God wanted us to have was not a cessation of activity but a peace within the toil. Hence to obtain such peace internally, I realised that I needed to remain in God, the Jehovah Shalom, continually. I felt that although our days there were packed to the brim (painting of the walls and sanctuary, the mural design, the children's camp, the English classes, feeding program, the planting of trees and the building of fences etc.), I still felt the Peace of God within me and the team. All of us were physically tired, but we still had the spiritual peace and rest within us.

God was our Jehovah Jireh, our never failing provider. He provided and blessed us with more than double the kids we expected for the children's camp (more than 200). It was a great surprise and delight to the team. Although it was tough on our part to run the program, I was overjoyed that the kids (many of whom were new) had the opportunity to know about this God who loves them. Furthermore, our Jehovah Jireh provided comfort for us in the hot weather by providing rain for us daily in the afternoons. This God also provided us with sufficient time to complete all that we had planned

for, and provided us with just enough money to cover the cost of the paint and the fences.

All in all, I thank God that I was indeed truly blessed with a hardworking, passionate, enthusiastic and motivated team. Even though the work we did was labour intensive and physically draining, we hung in together, supporting and motivating one another by singing songs. All of us have matured in one way or another, growing deeply in the Lord and stepping out of our comfort zone to bless others. For me, it has indeed been a great joy leading and learning from each and every one of my fellow team members. Each and every one of them was gifted in something given by the Lord, and I thank God that all of us used our talents to bless others and build up the Body of Christ.

Also, I thank God for the opportunity to be the team leader and thank Him for blessing me with many learning points that He has shown me throughout this journey. I hope that the church will continue to support the ministry in Cambodia by actively participating in these mission trips, especially for the youths to bring blessings to the other nations since Singapore has been blessed by God. Let us continue to keep the mission work, ministry work, pastors, staff and interns in the Life centre in prayer, such that the work they do will continue to touch the hearts of the people in Kg Chnang to turn to God.

Amos Lee



Firstly, I have to thank God for allowing us to return to Singapore safely and for giving all of us this opportunity to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life to just slow down a little to serve God.

When I say “slow down”, I do not mean that we did nothing in Cambodia; in fact, the few days we spent there were hectic and filled with activity. However, it was restful in a way that we all knew we put in a hundred and ten percent of our effort into serving God wholeheartedly. It was tiring to paint walls without much rest and yet, through this, the Lord taught me the importance of teamwork, patience, determination and meticulousness, all of which are qualities I do not possess.

There were many times I felt like giving up and just hiding somewhere away from all the work; yet, God continuously urged me to press on and push my

limits. Even though He did that, I could feel Him supporting each and every one of us and it was indeed encouraging!

I feel that we also learnt a lot from the people in Cambodia as most of them were so passionate about learning more about Christ and you could tell from the way they prayed that they really wanted to draw nearer to God. Moreover, the people there were kind and loving towards us even though we were aliens in their land. I really praise God that He has blessed them in a way that not many here in Singapore are blessed with.

Lastly, I am sure all of us came back to this country with a more willing heart to serve the Lord and glorify His name through our thoughts, words and deeds. I pray that the Lord will use each of us to bless the rest of the church and community. May our spiritually rewarding trip to Cambodia inspire others to have less hesitation about serving foreign lands with the help of God!

I thank God for the time we had in Cambodia, and for being with us throughout, using us to draw hearts to Him. Praise be to God!

KOH JALIN



I thank God for allowing me to take part in this mission trip to serve Him. I also thank him for giving us such a great team, and for helping us finish what we set out to do.

Even though I had gone on a mission trip before, this was the first time that I was part of the planning team. This was really an eye-opening experience for me. Initially, our Sunday meetings were boring and overly long; however, this was shown to be good for us in the end. Rev Anthony also taught me an important lesson on how situations always change during mission trips. For example, during all our planning sessions we had only planned to accommodate around 100 children for the kids camp, but on the actual day 200 children came. Initially, we were in a state of panic; but with God's help we managed to handle the situation well. Our team improvised extremely well. I was extremely exhausted from the painting, I thank God however for giving me strength to finish the job.

Also, on our day at the centre, there were lots and lots of insects which scared us a lot, but God gave us the courage to overcome the fear! Seeing how the children there were poor yet so happy taught me that we do not

need many things to be happy. I also learnt how to find joy and rest in The Lord.

Finally, I am most grateful for the staff at the centre for showing us hospitality. I will always remember the friendships I forged there!

Koh Chern Kiat

Looking back at the recent Cambodia Mission Trip, there are many points to take away, but to sum up in a verse, it would be Psalm 139:14:

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Living in a society like Singapore has caused us, or at least myself, to be secure in achievements. It has been subtly ingrained in me that my worth is based on what I can or cannot do. And this seems like the normal way of life for us since young – our lives are determined for us by the number of As we attain, or the number of certificates we receive; and now, as a young working adult, monetary compensation is handed out as an incentive for all the accomplishments we produce for the company. The list can go on, but the main point is that our validity is based purely on worldly merit (which is basically the opposite of true Christian righteousness). This is uninspiring.

In stark contrast, these worldly acclaim and achievements do not bother the Cambodians in the least. Sure, they might want to make it out of the Kampong and move to the city for a better life; but my guess is that even if they do not make it to the city, they are perfectly fine where they are. Contentment is something that Singaporeans like me can learn about. There is no need to strive exceedingly hard, or to tax my (already few) brain cells every day for things that are not that important.

In recent times, I have been questioning my self-worth. My infamous need for a "structure" in my life has really been hindering me from being able to do things for God. At the end of each day, I feel like so much time is wasted on trying to convince me to see things differently from others whom I work with, that perhaps more could be done if it were otherwise. The Cambodia trip has led me to see things in a slightly more different (and thankfully, assuring) light.

When we were in Cambodia, everyone's gifts and talents were obviously very different. Some were more skilled in the area of interaction with the kids

and the staff, whilst others were better equipped for planning tasks or dispensing encouragements. I know of a certain mission tripper who took the painstaking effort of writing long encouragement notes to the person that he was tasked to encourage, even at the expense of his sleep. And while observing all these, I kept asking God, where do I fit in? It seemed as though whatever I did, I did not seem to get any desired outcome.

Eventually, I settled for just doing what I could, and though I did not feel terribly encouraged in any remarkable scale, the mission trip opportunity sparked an insatiable need to find an answer to my question of “what can I do for you, God?” I eventually found some comfort in having brunch with two of my closest church girlfriends, who assured me that I am loved despite my seemingly hard-to-work-with character. I was motivated to just press on because I am in JCC for a reason. It is good for people to get encouragement from one another. However, I believe that this alone is not good enough. We also need encouragements from God via our relationship with Him. It is my firm conviction that godly counsel from many can find affirmation from what God speaks through His Word (Proverbs 15:22).

And so, at the end of this entry, I can only say that though I am still struggling with my self-confidence, this momentary “calmness” that I have reaped from the mission trip experience is a welcome break before I very quickly will have to find courage to face up to my next hurdle. I remember that God in all his infinite wisdom, made me, and loves me for who I am and I merit his favour only by His grace.

Kao Hui Ling (Youth Leader)



It was a great pleasure to be able to stay away from the busy society to go on a mission trip with some of the youths in PULSE. It was an awesome experience as I experienced God’s love and knowing how majestic He is. Having different age groups together enabled us to build better bonds and get to know one another more. This was also one of the objectives of the trip.

Through this trip, I have learnt many points. God has taught me many things through many people. Remaining in God, He is our Shepherd and He has a plan for us. This trip gave us plenty of personal time with God, as we made it a point to read a devotional article every day.

It was also an eye opener to see how the villagers live a life without technology and with all the different kinds of living creatures. There were many crickets and cockroaches around, especially at night. When I was helping out in one of the computer classes, a cricket flew into the room and immediately I ran far away. However the kids around me were not afraid. They even dared to catch it with their bare hands. That amazed me.

It also touched me to see how the kids were willing to learn. During the class, there was a blackout and most of the laptops were shutdown. However, they did not whine or give up; instead, they showed more enthusiasm, despite the fact that they had to repeat the whole document. I think that is something that we as Singaporeans should learn from them as we (or maybe just myself) tend to give up very easily.

Also, we ran a day camp over the weekend. We spent weeks in Singapore to prepare for the camp. We expected to have about 80 kids, but God multiplied the number. About 300 kids attended the camp. As there were too many people, some of our activities that were planned, such as handicraft and games, could not proceed. Proverbs 16:3 says, “commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.” Hence, the camp continued by just worshipping and dancing, which the kids really enjoyed. It was heartening to see the kids praising God with all their heart, mind and soul.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to god. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your mind In Christ Jesus.” –Philippians 4:6-7

Looking back, I feel that we are way too blessed with all the resources we have in Singapore, yet we are still taking things for granted. For example, I never had to worry about my 3 meals; instead I would worry about what to have for each meal. However, some Cambodians could not even afford 1 meal per day. It was also an honour to have the chance to interact with the interns and the kids. We taught them English and they taught us Khmer in return.

Through this trip, I have learnt that God has a plan for all of us. Though we may not understand why God chose to put us in a certain situation, but there is definitely a reason. Give thanks, be patient and wait for the answer.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and future.” – Jeremiah 29:11



WHAT HAVE I ACCOMPLISHED?

This past semester has been an eye opening one, particularly on the issue of significance. There were numerous times during the past semester when this issue came up again and again. Questions such as “what have I accomplished thus far?” and “what am I going to do when I get back to Singapore?” crossed my mind as I began to compare myself with my peers, who are steadily advancing in their careers, having children, winning awards and accumulating accomplishments.



This topic came up during one of my classes and a comment from my professor really struck me. He said (I’m paraphrasing here), “We will be astounded, completely amazed at the stories of faith that we will hear of the unlikeliest people, when we get to heaven.” My professor said this after he shared about one person in church he knew, who was not very eloquent, popular or prominent. However, this person remembered every single prayer request that people shared with him and sincerely prayed for each request consistently. There was one time this person came up to my professor and asked him about the status of a prayer request by my professor, which my professor had completely forgotten that he had even shared with this person. This person knew people’s names, including their children’s names, and would pray specifically for each person’s request. After that incident, my professor was completely humbled by this quiet person’s faithfulness and dedication to prayer.

After hearing this, the first thought that came to my mind was: “God does not look for significance or prominence. He looks for faithfulness and obedience.”

Throughout the semester, as I talked to my classmates, people in church and friends, I was astounded time and time again by their life of quiet, unassuming faithfulness. These were people who were bathroom cleaners, window washers, store clerks, administrative assistants, receptionists, electricians or construction workers. Some were even homeless, had just lost their job or been looking for a job for more than 8 months. They are not high flying executives or people of status or influence. I am always amazed and encouraged when I hear them share about their fears and struggles and how they continue to live out a life of faith. The key thing is that they do not let their fears and struggles overcome them. Instead, their faith in God as their provider and their faith that God has a purpose and plan for this period in their lives serve as their primary source of strength and hope.

Throughout the Bible, we see that God chooses ordinary and usually unlikely people to do His will. Looking at the people mentioned in Hebrews 11, the hall of faith, we find a murderer (Moses), a prostitute (Rahab), a deceiver (Jacob), a person who makes rash decisions (Jephtah), an adulterer (David) and a person of wavering faith (Gideon). These were the people mentioned by name whereas prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah and Isaiah were only referenced and not even mentioned by name. Looking at the 12 disciples, most of whom were unknown fishermen, they stood in stark contrast to the well-educated and socially prominent figures such as the Pharisees.

1 Cor 1:26-31 sums it up nicely – “For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

God has been teaching me to pursue faithfulness and obedience, that I may boast in the Lord and He may be glorified. This is in contrast to my human way of thinking which is to pursue status and wealth, so that I may boast in my accomplishments and glorify myself.

This is not easy to do. It goes against my human desires. Offering my life as a living sacrifice, to take up my cross and follow him, to die to myself and live for Him is a daily struggle. Thoughts and feelings of inadequacy, fear of losing out, insecurities about my self-worth don't disappear overnight. It is a slow and sometimes painful process of shedding my old identity and taking on my new identity in Christ. In this struggle, there are definitely low, depressing times. But I know that this is God's will that I surrender my life, ambitions, plans and desires to Him and I know that He will help me through it.

One of the songs we sing in church is “Always” by Kristian Stanfill. The lyrics of the song encourage me every time:

Troubles surround me, chaos abounding

My soul will rest in You
I will not fear the war, I will not fear the storm
My help is on the way, my help is on the way

Oh, my God, He will not delay
My refuge and strength always
I will not fear, His promise is true
My God will come through always, always

Let us be encouraged in difficult times of living a life of faithfulness and obedience for Jesus because “Our help is on the way, He will not delay”.

Samuel tan

donut camp 2013

I like this camp because it was fun. I wish I have it again. – *Nicolette*



I feel that this camp is a very interesting camp because we get to bond with others and feel what it's like to camp. – *Noami*



I like the camp, it was so fun. I

hope there will be a camp like this next year. – *Mun Yee*



I like this camp because I can get along with my friends and play with them and get to know more about Jesus too! It was very fun! – *Bernice*

I loved our leaders. They were fun! – *Triyan*

I like singing and dancing. – *Jonathan*

I liked our sleeping area because it is an air-conditioned room. I also liked the wet games because it is fun when we got splashed by the water. And I also liked the banner painting because it showed our creativity. Finally, I liked the food provided for us because it was tasty, yummy and delicious. Thank you!!! – *Won Kiat*



ANOTHER HAPPY OUTING FOR THE DIALECT GROUP ON 17TH JULY



God is always wonderfully blessing our JCC dialect outing. I reached church before 9.00 am, but all uncles & aunties were already there raring to go. Wow!

On board the bus, with prayer by Deacon Peter Cheong, we zoomed to Tai Hua Food Industries (THFI) at Jalan Besut. The company, with its long history in Singapore, is famous for its sauces which are popularly used for seasoning food or as condiments.

We had a sing-along session at THFI combined with exercises to warm up everyone. The staff from THFI was happy to hear our singing. Praise the Lord! We also watched video clippings of how THFI was formed and how the business grew. We walked to the backyard to see jars of sauces being fermented from soya bean into soya sauce.

While our group was busy buying the sauces, it rained cats and dogs outside. God is wonderful. The downpour cooled down the weather but we were still able to keep ourselves dry all the way to the next factory we visited, Tai Sun Food Industries at Pandan Loop. This company is a household name here for its tasty snack food enjoyed by children and adults alike.



As our tummy started to make noises, we proceeded to West Coast Park for our lunch and a breezy walk along the seaside. In good time, God had stopped the rain. He is a perfect weather controller. He knows when/where/how to rain and when/where/how not to rain. Thanks be to our living God.

Last stop was at the Sarika Gourmet Coffee Company at Chin Bee Avenue. The whole management team came out to welcome us, making us feel like VIPs. Although we were not able to visit the factory production facility, the coffee introduction by the GM and his staff was warm and informative. We were treated to aromatic coffee and each one was even given a gift of a full pack of Sarika coffee power which would normally cost something like \$7 in the shops.



It was a great outing. Everyone returned from this rewarding excursion smiling broadly with their collection of free gifts of Sarika Coffee, Tai Sun peanuts and Tai Hua sauce. As the saying goes, 满载而归。

Thank God for his leading hands!

Peggy Tan

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE LET US
REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT. ~ Psalm 118:5

This verse seemed exceptionally apt on our Abundance CG outing in June after several days of hazy days with high PSI. With a clear blue sky and a soft grass patch, with squirrels running around and birds chirping away, the sea breeze blew our way and the kids' laughters filled the air. How much more beautiful could it get as we fellowshipped in Our Lord's Name!



The picnic mats were overlaid with food lovingly prepared by each family. Pastor Andrew's sharing from God's Word nourished our souls. And of course, the immense joy as we tucked into the various kinds of durians and chatted away. Nope, we definitely did not attempt to fruit some durian seeds at the park.



We were grateful that our Heavenly Father had made sure our CG grew stronger and bonded in love on that lovely day.

Caroline
JCC ABUDANCE CELL